



11-8-1853

Letter from John W. H. Baker to Julia Ann Baker, 1853 Nov. 8

John W. H. Baker

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Mokelumne Hill, Nov. 8th, 1853

My dear wife

Never a more disappointed man would you wish to see than myself this evening from the fact that the State Mail arrived without bringing me a letter when I had reason to think I was sure of one. You may have an opportunity to experience the disappointment yourself but I am sure I shall give you no opportunity to do so on account of my neglect for I would not wish to give any one so severe a trial as disappointed expectation produces in the mind of the self-exiled Californina. I hope never again to experience such a failure of news. I can but attribute this one to your neglecting to send your letter out soon enough for mailing at N. Y. and if such is the fact I wish you to send in good season hereafter. Some 4 days previous to the day of sailing. I suppose these few lines will insure my letters without fail. I have written you by every mail since leaving with one exception and that was the one which left San Francisco Sept. 15th which was 4 days previous to my arrival there and in that case I think I was very excusable. But ^{you say} as "I suppose you will not want me to write so" therefor I will go on and make some remarks of a different nature. Such for instance as to remark that I am in my usual good health and as I suppose prospering in business. Our business hold as good as ever and if nothing occurs to prevent I shall in the course of events be able to return to my native State in two or three years with my efforts in a degree accomplished, and the arrival of that time is the thing most wished for in my list of many wishes. I am still of the opinion that you are abundantly better off where you are than you could be here, and I can surely support you there with less than half the cost of our support here with all the comforts you could ask aside from that of the presence of your husband. I do not want that you should stint yourself, but, I wish you to indulge occasionally in some of

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the delicacies or even luxuries of the old N. H. State. I think Dr. Holbrook will go to Chesterfield after his family in February next and if so I shall insist upon his going to see you if possible. He thinks he shall make a stop here or in the state for the next four or five years certainly and perhaps longer. He feels quite homesick at times but not so much so at the present time as when I first came here.

He receives a long letter regularly from his wife. He says he has not missed a single mail and I was in hopes I should not, but such is not the case. I hope to receive a double amount at the next mail to repair the deficiency. I made a very poor exhibition of the flowers of California to Sarah but the flowers that I intended to send were thrown from the table into the street while I was absent on business. I might obtain several varieties now if I had time or could think to pluck them in my visits about town. I noticed two or three very pretty bunches of flowers yesterday as I went to dress a broken leg for a young man, such as I have no recollection of seeing before. One had a white colored blossom and another a beautiful yellow. I will try to collect some of them and send in my next letter. I received a letter from Mr. Wingate a few days since. He was well. Says he shall call up and make me a visit before he leaves for the East. It seems very strange when I think of the difference of time between this place and that of N. H. I am now sitting at my table writing you a letter while you (nothing unusual occurring) are in bed and sleeping quietly while the clock in your sitting room has just struck off the hour of midnight, and our time here is a little past eight o'clock, and tomorrow morning while we are indulging ourselves at our breakfast you will be about taking your dinner. There is near four hours difference in the time of day between the two places. You can imagine about eleven o'clock of almost any day that we have just hoisted ourselves

from our beds, which we described to you previously and are about sweeping our office of the filth and dust collected upon the floor the day previous. After which operation I usually go to my breakfast and after my return Dr. H. goes and obtains his breakfast. This being done we are obliged to lounge about our office unless we have calls about the village to make or some one applies at the shop for relief from some disease with which he is afflicted. I have this moment received a call from an Irishman who has a little derangement of the stomach and bowels for which I have him an emetic, a 2 ounce phial of cholera mixture and a phial of Pain Killer, the whole amounting in Meriden to 50cts with a closing remark, "Doctor you are rather high in your charge." While this poor sone of Erin was damaged the amount of \$3.00 and very thankfull at that. Extracting teeth here would support a man and give him an opportunity to lay be something beside "for a rainy day". I do not know what would become of the people of N. H. were they obliged to pay \$3.00 for extracting a single tooth. I received \$15 one day in pay for pulling teeth. I want you to make a reckoning and see hom many I should be obliged to extract fo that sum at 12 $\frac{1}{2}$ cents each. I think such a days work would be enough to astound the natives of Meriden and therefore in order that no disturbance should arise I have to request you to keep all my big stories to yourself. I think it can do no good to report from time to time the contents of my letters but it is sufficient for most of my friends that they know that I am well and doing well without giving them the minutia of events. You and all my friends are fairly aware that my opportunity here and prospect of business was fair before I left home and it makes all the difference in the world with ones success in being blessed with such an opportunity. I might have come to this place and set up as a physician under almost any other circumstances

than I did and I might not have been able to pay my board. In fact a physician here is nothing only so far as situation and favourable circumstances make him. It is true that a Dutch quack would make a fortune in the sight of some of our young men who pretend to be physicians and who are pretty thoroughly read. But the truth is that quacking is a jewel here to those who are well versed in it, while the physician without capital or strong friends and dependant on practice aside from a regular apothecary's establishment would starve to death. In my leisure moments I am trying to obtain a little knowledge of the Spanish language and I find I am getting so that I can very readily make known to the Spanish people my wishes and can generally ascertain what they wish when they come into the office. If Sarah intends to go into the world as a teacher tell her by all means to obtain a knowledge of French so that she can speak and teach it. A knowledge of that language to me here would put many dollars in my pocket which will now escape my clutches. I shall send you some money as soon as I can earn it after the payment of my indebtedness in this place which will be some months yet. We have been to an unusual amount of expense recently in the purchase of Medicine which of necessity draws rather heavily upon my income, but for the next four or five weeks I think we shall not need to incur much expense in the way of medicines and if business increases as we have reason to expect I shall get on in my payment very fast. I can clear more here in one month than I could in Meriden in one year--and that in the real "Oro" as the Spanish have it. Oliver was here today. He had just returned from Stockton. Was in his good health and made his stay short. You may inform Nathan Andrus or some of his folks that I have seen Hosea Couch. He is a teamster here in the place and is doing a good business. He owns a very good team, 2 large bay horses and a large waggon for

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teaming, whole team valued at \$600 or \$700. Oliver has been trying to hire him to draw about 17,000 lbs. of merchandise from here to Jesus Maria for him. I think he will draw it. I shall send the children a present if I can obtain anything. In the mean time, as it is getting late, I must close by bidding you all good night.

From your affectionate husband

Mrs. Julia Ann Baker

John W. H. Baker